

PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLE

**A Catholic Theology of the Land?:
The State of the Question¹**

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1. Introduction

For the new relationship between Catholics and Jews that began with the Second Vatican Council, one of the most important building blocks was articulated in the 1974 "Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, No. 4." Its preamble states, "Christians must...strive to acquire a better knowledge of the basic components of the religious tradition of Judaism; they must strive to learn by what essential traits Jews define themselves in the light of their own religious experience."

However, for Christians it is especially difficult to appreciate one particular aspect of Jewish self-understanding: the centrality of the Land of Israel (*Eretz Yisrael*). This is because there is no analogous sentiment in Christianity. The Land of Israel is scarcely mentioned in the New Testament and it is not inextricably connected to Christian theology. The Land has no central place in the Christian effort to live as Christ, and Christians have no visceral liturgical yearning for the Land or for Jerusalem, except perhaps in the sense of the heavenly or eschatological city.

¹ An earlier version of this essay was delivered orally at the semi-annual consultation of delegates of the National Council of Synagogues and the Bishops' Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops on May 7, 2013, at the Jewish Theological Seminary, by invitation of Rev. Dr. Dennis McManus.

It is true that for Christians, the region has a historical or even a sacramental aspect² as the place where Jesus lived and died, and so there is also a long history of pilgrimages there. It is also true that Palestinian Christians have a distinctive self-understanding as being the "living stones" whose church communities have continuously witnessed to the events of Jesus' life in the places where they physically occurred. In general, though, Christianity strongly emphasizes that God can be encountered anywhere, that holiness may be found in any land or place.

Indeed, far from resonating with the centrality of *Eretz Yisrael* for Judaism, Christianity has taught what might be called "a counter-history," denying the Jewish covenantal bond with the Land. Supersessionist Christianity claimed that Jews had forfeited any religious tie to the Land because of their alleged collective guilt for the crucifixion of Jesus. Those who polemicized against Judaism argued that God had cursed all Jews, as evidenced by the destruction of the Temple and the supposed condition of Jews as homeless wanderers. As is well known, this outlook was expressed by Pope Pius X to Theodor Herzl in 1904. According to Herzl, who was seeking papal approval for his Zionist project, Pius said, "The Jews have not recognized our Lord, therefore we cannot recognize the Jewish people. ...The Jewish faith was the foundation of our own, but it has been superseded by the teachings of Christ, and we cannot admit that it still enjoys any validity."³

All of these factors make it very difficult for most Christians to resonate with the spiritual significance of the Land of Israel for Jews. We have no cognate covenantal connection, we stress the universality of the Christian Gospel, and we have long precedents of rejecting any ongoing Jewish spiritual ties to the Land. Prior to the Second Vatican Council,

² See Richard C. Lux, *The Jewish People, the Holy Land, and the State of Israel: A Catholic View* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2010).

³ Raphael Patai, ed., *The Complete Diaries of Theodor Herzl* (New York/London: Herzl Press/Thomas Yoseloff, 1960), 4: 1603.

magisterial or papal documents would have posited that Jewish covenantal life had been either divinely revoked or cursed, as in the case of Pius X. This creates a serious challenge for today's post-supersessionist Catholic Church that recognizes the ongoing validity of the Jewish covenant with God. How can we develop a theology that respects the Land's significance for our Jewish brothers and sisters?⁹ A survey of the state of the question in post-*Nostra Aetate* Catholicism will make it possible to sketch out the current parameters within which such a theology of the Land in the Catholic community today can authentically develop.

2. "Notes on the Correct Way to Present Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church"

The Vatican II declaration *Nostra Aetate* made no reference to *Eretz Yisrael*, except perhaps indirectly when it stated that: "...in her rejection of every persecution against any [person], the Church, mindful of the patrimony she shares with the Jews and moved *not by political reasons* but by the Gospel's spiritual love, decries hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone."⁴ The phrase "not by political reasons" responded to opposition to the declaration stemming from the Arab-Israeli conflict (as it was then called). Some Council fathers argued that any positive statement about Judaism would be seen as favoring the State of Israel and might bring retaliation upon the Christian minorities living in predominantly Muslim countries.⁵ Thus, *Nostra Aetate* sought to separate its theological

⁴ Second Vatican Council, *Nostra Aetate*, §4 (1965), available at http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/va-at-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html, accessed July 19, 2013. Emphasis added.

⁵ See, e.g., the interventions of Cardinal Ignatius Gabriel Tappouni and Archbishop Joseph Tawil during the Second Vatican Council's "Great Debate" on what would become *Nostra Aetate*, respectively on Sept 28 and 29, 1964; available at: <http://www.ccrj.us/dialogika-resources/documents-and-statements/roman-catholic/second-vatican-council/na-debate>, accessed July 16, 2013.

inspiration from any political considerations. This motivation, incidentally, probably also contributed to Pope Paul VI's careful avoidance of the word "Israel" in his historic visit to the "Holy Land" in January 1964. An ill-chosen sentence uttered during his closely scrutinized pilgrimage could have scuttled *Nostra Aetate's* chances in the Council.

Although it had precursors from various national bishops' conferences,⁶ the first post-conciliar Vatican text to fully engage the existence of the modern State of Israel came from the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with Jews (and note, again, the adjective "religious" in the Commission's title). Its 1985, "Notes on the Correct Way to Present Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church" stated the following:

The history of [the community of] Israel did not end in 70 A.D. It continued, especially in a numerous Diaspora which allowed Israel to carry to the whole world a witness—often heroic—of its fidelity to the one God and to “exalt Him in the presence of all the living” (Tobit 13:4), while preserving the memory of the land of their forefathers at the heart of their hope (Passover Seder). Christians are invited to understand this religious attachment which finds its roots in Biblical tradition, without however making their own any

⁶ See, for example, the French Bishops' Committee for Relations with Jews, "Statement" (April 16, 1973), V and the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (USA), "Statement on Catholic-Jewish Relations" (Nov 20, 1975). The former is available at <http://www.ccrj.us/dialogika-resources/documents-and-statements/roman-catholic/other-conferences-of-catholic-bishops/483-cefr1973> and the latter at <http://www.ccrj.us/dialogika-resources/documents-and-statements/roman-catholic/us-conference-of-catholic-bishops/479-nccb1975>. Accessed July 16, 2013. As with the 1985 Vatican "Notes," both of these documents urge Christians to understand and respect Jewish ties to *Eretz Yisrael*, but not to embrace any particular religious understanding of the foundation of the modern State of Israel. They also all recognize that there are legitimate political claims on the part of local Arab peoples. How to hold all these goals together remains an unanswered question.

particular religious interpretation of this relationship. The existence of the State of Israel and its political options should be envisaged not in a perspective which is in itself religious, but in their reference to the common principles of international law. The permanence of Israel (while so many ancient peoples have disappeared without trace) is a historic fact and a sign to be interpreted within God's design. We must in any case rid ourselves of the traditional idea of a people punished, preserved as a living argument for Christian apologetic. It remains a chosen people..."⁷

This paragraph sets forth the Vatican's highly nuanced distinction between the theological and politico-historical aspects of Christian attitudes toward the State of Israel. It could be summed up in these three points:

1. Catholics cannot think of Jews as punished and so divinely detached from *Eretz Yisrael*.
2. The continued existence of the Jewish people, *B'nai Yisrael* or 'Am *Yisrael*, is God's will.
3. Catholics should respect and seek to understand Jewish attachment to the Land of Israel (*Eretz Yisrael*), but the existence of the modern State of Israel (*Medinat Yisrael*) should not be interpreted by Catholics primarily in religious or biblical categories, but according to international legal principles.

To elaborate on this third point: the State of Israel (*Medinat Yisrael*) is a nation-state whose citizens are not co-extensive with the covenanting community of *B'nai Yisrael*, even though the Land of Israel (*Eretz Yisrael*) is a defining reality for the Jewish people as a whole. The 1985 "Notes" thus expressed an unresolved tension: methodologically, how do

⁷ Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, "Notes on the Correct Way to Present Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church", (1985): VI, 25. <http://www.ccrj.us/dialogika-resources/documents-and-statements/roman-catholic/vatican-curia/234-notes>; accessed July 16, 2013.

Catholics go about respecting the religious centrality of the Land of Israel for Jews while considering the modern State of Israel only in terms of distinct non-religious international legal norms? This tension is part of a larger modern issue: the Catholic magisterium acknowledges that theological activity (beginning with the composition of the Bible itself) is historically conditioned.⁸ Although making distinctions is possible, a recognition of historical conditioning would seem to lead to the conclusion that the religious and secular realms cannot be fully separated.⁹

This tension between religious convictions and modern geopolitics is also present among Jewish thinkers. For example, Rabbi Henry Siegman made a presentation to the 1976 Jerusalem meeting of the International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee,¹⁰ in which he observed, on the one hand, that:

The State of Israel is the result not only of modern forces of nationalism, or even of the persecution of the

⁸ Franjo Cardinal Seper, *Mysterium Ecclesiae* (Declaration In Defense of the Catholic Doctrine on the Church Against Certain Errors of the Present Day), Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (June 24, 1973), 5, available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19730705_mysterium-ecclesiae_en.html, accessed July 16, 2013.

⁹ This point is also relevant to another element in Catholic-Jewish relations, namely, the way in which Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik's essay "Confrontation" is used by some Orthodox Jews to seek to restrict conversation between Jews and Catholics to only secular or civil topics. See the panel discussion "Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik on Interreligious Dialogue: Forty Years Later," (November 23, 2003), at http://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/research_sites/cjl/texts/center/confere/nces/soloveitchik/index.html, accessed July 19, 2013, for the original text and discussion of it.

¹⁰ Henry Siegman, "Ten Years of Catholic-Jewish Relations: A Reassessment" in International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee, *Fifteen Years of Catholic-Jewish Dialogue, 1970-1985: Selected Papers* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1988), pp. 26-45. See especially the section on "The State of Israel," pp. 33-37.

Jew. ...The Jew is driven by a force as old as the Bible to reunite with the Land. The importance of this 'internal' significance of Israel is one which Christians (and Jews) often fail to grasp.

On the other hand, Rabbi Siegman cautioned that:

[T]he recognition that Judaism—unlike Christianity—is a faith uniquely dependent on the national existence of a particular people does not translate itself automatically into an argument for Jewish political rights in Palestine. We have been less than meticulous in making those necessary distinctions that need to be made when invoking religious tradition and Biblical texts. ...To raise this concern is not to bring into question the fundamental Jewish unity of faith, land and people. This unity remains at the core of our identity and existence. What it does emphasize is the danger of blurring the crucial distinction between the religious meaning that Jews appropriate...from political events (a Biblically-conditioned Jewish reflex), and imbuing these events with an absolute sacredness that removes them from the realm of history. The latter is Jewishly uncharacteristic, and can lead to a chauvinism that is oblivious to the rights and aspirations of others. In theological terms, it risks becoming *avodah zarah*—idolatry.

3. The Catholic Biblical Renaissance

For Catholics, this need to distinguish between the intertwined political and religious realms is augmented by the renaissance in Catholic biblical studies that began in 1943 with Pope Pius XII's encyclical letter, *Divino Afflante Spiritu*. In brief, Catholic teaching today insists that "For the correct understanding of what the sacred author wanted to assert, due attention must be paid to the customary and characteristic styles of perceiving, speaking, and narrating which prevailed at

the time of the sacred writer...”¹¹ As the Pontifical Biblical Commission explained, this is because “Holy Scripture, inasmuch as it is the 'word of God in human language,' has been composed by human authors in all its various parts and in all the sources that lie behind them.”¹²

For this reason, Catholic teaching rejects what is commonly called a “fundamentalist” approach to the Bible:

It refuses to admit that the inspired word of God has been expressed in human language and that this word has been expressed, under divine inspiration, by human authors possessed of limited capacities and resources. ...[F]undamentalism actually invites people to a kind of intellectual suicide. It injects into life a false certitude, for it unwittingly confuses the divine substance of the biblical message with what are in fact its human limitations.¹³

This defining Catholic scriptural orientation rules out the facile application of biblical land promises to the modern world. Catholic hermeneutical principles understand the act of interpretation as “a question of overcoming the distance between the time of the authors and first addressees of the biblical texts, and our own contemporary age, and of doing so in a way that permits a correct actualization of the Scriptural message so that the Christian life of faith may find nourishment.”¹⁴ This correct interpretation of the bible should “involve an aspect of creativity; it also ought to confront new questions so as to

¹¹ Second Vatican Council, *Dei Verbum* (1965), §12. <http://www.ccrj.us/dialogika-resources/documents-and-statements/roman-catholic/second-vatican-council/806-dei-verbum>, accessed July 16, 2013.

¹² Pontifical Biblical Commission, “The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church” (1993), I, A. <http://www.ccrj.us/dialogika-resources/documents-and-statements/roman-catholic/vatican-curia/287-pbc-1993>, accessed July 16, 2013.

¹³ *Ibid.*, I,F.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, II,A,2.

respond to them out of the Bible.”¹⁵ Biblical texts, in the Catholic understanding, have to be “reread in the light of new circumstances and applied to the contemporary situation of the people of God.”¹⁶ How precisely this applies to the biblical land promises is a critical and difficult topic, one beyond the scope of this essay.

Thus, the Catholic community today finds itself in the unprecedented situation of renouncing its supersessionist past and grappling with the centrality of *Eretz Yisrael* for Jews in the context of the existence of a modern Jewish nation-state. One pathway closed to us is a simplistic “fundamentalist” implementation of biblical land promises.

4. Jews as the “Chosen People”

Another pathway closed to Catholics is to backslide into a sort of “default position” that denies or minimizes the vitality of Jewish covenantal life. This was vividly illustrated recently when after the 2010 special bishops' Synod on the Middle East in the Vatican, Melkite Archbishop Cyril Bustros said in a news conference conducted in French:

[W]e say that we cannot resort to theological and Biblical assumptions as a tool to justify injustice. We want to say that the promise of God in the Old Testament, relating to the “promised land”...as Christians, we’re saying that this promise was essentially nullified [in French, “abolished”] by the presence of Jesus Christ, who then brought about the Kingdom of God. As Christians, we cannot talk about a “promised land” for the Jews. We talk about a “promised land” which is the Kingdom of God. That’s the promised land, which encompasses the entire earth with a message of peace and justice and equality for all the children of God.

¹⁵ Ibid., III,A,3.

¹⁶ Ibid., IV,A. How these Catholic hermeneutical principles relate to Jewish interpretative practices would be a worthwhile subject for discussion.

There is no preferred or privileged people. All men and women from every country have become the “chosen people.” This is clear for us. We cannot just refer to the “promised land” to justify the return of the Jews in Israel, and [ignore] the Palestinians who were kicked out of their land. Five million Jews kicked out three or four million Palestinians from their land, and this is not justifiable. There’s no “chosen people” any longer for Christians. Everybody is the “chosen people.” What we say is something political. Sacred scripture should not be used to justify the occupation of Palestinian land on the part of the Israelis.¹⁷

It should be clear from my comments about Catholic biblical interpretation that Archbishop Bustros was quite correct in saying that Old Testament Land promises cannot be simply transposed into the twentieth or twenty-first centuries. However, in rejecting this fundamentalist procedure, he drew upon supersessionist argumentation originating from the patristic period; namely, that Christian universalism has supplanted Jewish particularism.¹⁸

In his Apostolic Letter in response to the Synod on the Middle East, Pope Benedict XVI seemed to be responding to Archbishop Bustros when he wrote:

¹⁷ John L. Allen, Jr., “Thinking Straight about Israel, the Jews, and the Archbishop,” *NCR Online* (Oct 27, 2010). <http://ncronline.org/blogs/all-things-catholic/thinking-straight-about-israel-jews-and-archbishop>, accessed July 16, 2013.

¹⁸ So, for example, Origen (*Contra Celsum*, IV, 22): “One of the facts which show that Jesus was some divine and sacred person is just that on his account such great and fearful calamities have now for a long time befallen the Jews... For they committed the most impious crime of all, when they conspired against the Savior of mankind, in the city where they performed to God the customary rites which were symbols of profound mysteries. Therefore that city where Jesus suffered these indignities had to be utterly destroyed. The Jewish nation had to be overthrown, and God’s invitation to blessedness transferred to others, I mean the Christians, to whom came the teaching about the simple and pure worship of God. And they received new laws which fit in with the order established universally.”

The bonds uniting Christians and Jews are many and they run deep. They are anchored in a precious common spiritual heritage. There is of course our faith in one God, the Creator, who reveals himself, offers his unending friendship to mankind and out of love desires to redeem us. There is also the Bible, much of which is common to both Jews and Christians. For both, it is the word of God. Our common recourse to sacred Scripture draws us closer to one another. Moreover, Jesus, a son of the *Chosen People*, was born, lived and died a Jew (cf. *Rom* 9:4-5). Mary, his Mother, likewise invites us to rediscover the Jewish roots of Christianity. These close bonds are a unique treasure of which Christians are proud and for which they are indebted to the *Chosen People*. The Jewishness of the Nazarene allows Christians to taste joyfully the world of the Promise and resolutely introduces them into the faith of the *Chosen People*, making them a part of that People. Yet the person and the deepest identity of Jesus also divide them, for in him Christians recognize the Messiah, the Son of God.¹⁹

The affirmative use of the phrase “Chosen People” three times in one paragraph is certainly noteworthy in this context. The pope is implicitly correcting Archbishop Bustros's universalization of the concept of chosenness when that denies the ongoing covenantal status of the Jewish people. Or to put it another way, Catholic theology must affirm that the Jewish people are “chosen,” i.e., are covenanting with God. The challenge for Catholic theology is to discern what this affirmation means in terms of Jewish covenantal attachment to *Eretz Yisrael*, an aspect of covenantal life that is foreign to the Christian mode of covenanting in Christ.

¹⁹ Benedict XVI, *Ecclesia in Medio Oriente* (Sept 14, 2012), §20. Emphases added.

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20120914_ecclesia-in-medio-oriente_en.html, accessed July 16, 2103.

It does seem clear, though, that Catholic theological engagement with the centrality of *Eretz Yisrael* for Jews can endorse neither a fundamentalist extreme that blithely asserts, “The Bible says that God gave the Land to the Jews,” nor a supersessionist universalization that dismisses the particularity of the Jewish covenantal experience. The task awaiting us is to articulate a positively formulated centrist hermeneutic.

5. The Pastoral Predicament of Palestinian Catholics

Archbishop Bustros was caught in this unresolved theological challenge: How should Catholics critically actualize biblical land passages in the twenty-first century?²⁰ Given their experience of statelessness and Israeli governance, it is plainly and understandably difficult for Palestinian Catholics to embrace the post-Vatican II renunciation of classic supersessionism because they perceive this renunciation as legitimating the claims of right-wing Jewish settlers and Western Christian Zionists that the Bible demands their own physical supersession by Israelis.

There is an additional spiritual problem for Middle-Eastern Catholics that has been raised in dialogues between the International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCJ) and some signatories of the December 2009 statement, “Kairos Palestine: A Moment of Truth: A word of faith, hope, and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering.”²¹ Palestinian Christians find it difficult to draw spiritual sustenance from the

²⁰ “Actualization” is here understood here as the companion activity with “Explanation” in the dialectical process of biblical interpretation. The interpreter exegetes the biblical text to “explain” it in its own frames of reference but also actualizes the text to understand its significance for today’s world by putting ancient witnesses to faith into dialogue with today’s faith community. See PBC, “The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church” (1993), IV (op. cit.).

²¹ Available at <http://www.kairospalestine.ps/sites/default/Documents/English.pdf>, accessed July 19, 2013.

Old Testament.²² Understandably, they tend to react negatively to biblical references to “Israel” because they relate them to their experiences of the modern Israeli state. To quote from a recent text of the ICCJ:

Those scriptures—which because they emerged from situations of oppression (e.g., Exodus), despair (e.g., Lamentations) and suffering (e.g., Job), and have over the centuries brought hope to countless distressed people—are tragically unhelpful to many Palestinian Christians. We admire and encourage those Christian pastors who are struggling valiantly against circumstances that promote a kind of modern neo-Marcionism, a very early distortion of Christianity that discarded the Hebrew scriptures.²³

Some might wonder if I have digressed from the main focus of these remarks: the challenges Catholic theology faces in respectfully encountering what Rabbi Siegman called, “the fundamental Jewish unity of faith, land and people.” To me, this seeming excursus serves to underscore the heightened challenges confronting Palestinian Catholics on these matters, which I think all Catholic theologians should bear in mind. In addition, to paraphrase the late Rabbi Leon Klenicki, I think we should all make a special effort to “have mercy upon words” when discussing the volatile subject of theologies of the Land in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.²⁴

²² See the relevant comments in Patriarch Michel Sabbah, “Reading the Bible in the Land of the Bible” (Nov. 1993).

http://www.lpj.org/newsite2006/patriarch/pastoral-letters/1993/readingthebible_en.html, accessed July 16, 2013.

²³ ICCJ, “As Long as You Believe in a Living God, You Must Have Hope: Reflections on the Role of Religious and Interreligious Groups in Promoting Reconciliation about and in the Troubled Middle East,” (May 13, 2013), §5.

<http://www.ccrj.us/dialogika-resources/documents-and-statements/interreligious/1219-iccj2013may13>, accessed July 16, 2013.

²⁴ See ICCJ, “Let Us Have Mercy Upon Words: A Plea from the International Council of Christians and Jews to All Who Seek Interreligious Understanding” (July 26, 2010).

I end this survey of Vatican texts relevant to a Catholic theology of the Land by noting that the Holy See maintains a diplomatic corps and has formal ambassadorial-level relations with many nations, including the State of Israel.²⁵ This is one factor that sets relations between Israel and the Catholic Church on a different footing than the Jewish state's interactions with other Christian communities.

6. Conclusion: An Unresolved Hermeneutical and Theological Challenge

I suggested above that Catholic theologians today are challenged by the question: How should Catholics critically actualize biblical land passages today? The question is even further complicated by an observation made by the U.S. Catholic Bishops in 1975: "In dialogue with Christians, Jews have explained that they do not consider themselves as a church, a sect, or a denomination, as is the case among Christian communities, but rather as a peoplehood that is not solely racial, ethnic or religious, but in a sense a composite of all these."²⁶ Does this mean that Catholic theology must distinguish among the various ways—religious, spiritual, ethnic, political, historical, etc.—in which the Land is central to Jewish identity, and if so how, and by what criteria?

I also suggested earlier that, *mutatis mutandis*, Jewish thinkers are also challenged by the question of how to relate biblical and rabbinic texts regarding *Eretz Yisrael* to the reality of the modern nation-state of *Medinat Yisrael*. In other words,

<http://www.ccjr.us/dialogika-resources/themes-in-todays-dialogue/isrpal/855-iccj2010july26>, accessed July 16, 2013.

²⁵ The 1993 "Fundamental Agreement" (<http://www.ccjr.us/dialogika-resources/documents-and-statements/roman-catholic/vatican-curia/292-state-1993>, accessed July 16, 2013) between the Holy See and the State of Israel does not contain any elements useful in developing a Catholic "Land theology" and so has not been quoted here. Some legal aspects of that agreement, as of this writing, still have not been fully implemented despite years of negotiations.

²⁶ NCCB, "[Statement on Catholic-Jewish Relations](#)" (1975), op. cit.

both Jews and Catholics are challenged to actualize the Land dimensions of Judaism's covenantal life—couched in ancient political systems and worldviews—in our very different social, historical, and religiously plural contexts today. The different Jewish and Christian perspectives are not to be trivialized. There are great contrasts, for instance, between the Jewish sense of peoplehood and their minority longing for security on the one hand, and the Christian global reach with its emphasis on the universality of God's salvation in Christ on the other.

Nevertheless, is it not conceivable that we could collaborate in bringing our different traditions of interpretation to bear on these complex issues? Since we both find this question perplexing within our respective frames of reference, perhaps we could creatively open up new approaches if we intensified our dialogue in a sustained and focused way. Perhaps we could each make progress, not despite our different traditions and perspectives, but actually *because* of them. Our blessed, if still youthful, “new relationship” gives us opportunities for a mutually enriching interreligious synergy that our ancestors could not have imagined. Let's not squander this opportunity as the fiftieth anniversary of *Nostra Aetate* approaches.